



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Tennessee

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TRAINER SENTENCED FOR HORSE SORING VIOLATIONS

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. - Paul Blackburn, 36, of Shelbyville, Tenn., was sentenced to 12 months probation and a \$1,000 fine, by the Honorable Harry S. Mattice, U.S. District Judge in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee at Chattanooga. As part of Blackburn's probation, Judge Mattice ordered him to write an article describing horse soring methods used in the gaited horse community, the effects soring has on the horses, and the scope of horse soring in the industry. Blackburn pleaded guilty on October 18, 2011, to a federal indictment charging him with conspiracy to violate the Horse Protection Act and substantive Horse Protection Act violations. Co-defendants Barney Davis and Christen Altman are scheduled to be sentenced on February 27, 2012, at 2:00 p.m.

The indictment and subsequent conviction of Blackburn was the result of a seven-month investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General (USDA-OIG) Agent Julie McMillian. The USDA-OIG has the authority to investigate criminal violations of the Horse Protection Act including allegations related to soring and false entries or statements. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steve Neff and Kent Anderson represented the United States. This case, along with the Chris Zahnd case in the Middle District of Tennessee, are the first two criminal prosecutions of Horse Protection Act violations in approximately 20 years.

As set forth at the time the original indictment was returned, Special Agent-in-Charge, Karen Citizen-Wilcox, Southeast Region, stated, "The USDA- OIG will continue to aggressively pursue violations of the Horse Protection Act in order to protect horses and competitors from illegal and unfair acts and practices."

U.S. Attorney Bill Killian said, "the crime committed by the individual in this conspiracy is an example of a wide-spread problem in the equine industry that gives unfair and illegal advantage to some competitors over others, in addition to causing cruelty to the animals. This issue has our attention and we will continue to pursue violators of the Horse Protection Act to assure fairness in competition and to protect the welfare of the horses that are symbol of our state."

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